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GEORGE RAINSFORD FAIRBANKS

George Rainsford Fairbanks was born in Watertown, in northern New York, July 5, 1820, and died at his summer home at the University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee, August 3, 1906, in the eighty-seventh year of his age. He graduated at Union College, Schenectady, N. Y., with the class of 1839, at the age of nineteen, receiving later the degree of M.A., both from his *alma mater* and from Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut. While at college he was a member of the parent chapter of the Sigma Phi fraternity, founded in 1827, one of the first and oldest of the organizations that constitute the Greek letter society system, in our colleges, now spread over the United States. In 1842 he was admitted to the bar in New York State. In this year, 1842, upon the cessation of the internal wars in Florida, that territory offered special attractions to immigrants, and in the same year the young man of twenty-two removed from New York State to the Southern Territory. This was three years before Florida was admitted to the Union, and he remained a citizen of the latter Territory and State for the next sixty-four years. A long span of years, as American history goes — born under James Monroe, he was a citizen of Florida from the administration of John Tyler to that of Theodore Roosevelt.

He first settled in historic St. Augustine, but later made his home in Fernandina. He became closely identified with the State of his adoption. For four years (1842-46), during the territorial days, he was clerk of the United States Superior and District Courts for the northern district of Florida; and the year after Florida's admission to the Union in 1845, he was a member of the State Senate (1846-48). He held other positions and was at one time President of the Fruit Growers Association of the State.

Early attracted to the romantic history of Florida, he became the historian of the State. His first published book, expanded from a lecture, was the "History and Antiquities of the City of

St. Augustine, Florida, Founded A. D. 1565. Containing some of the most interesting portions of the Early History of Florida. By George R. Fairbanks, Vice-President of the Florida Historical Society. New York, Charles B. Norton, Agent for Libraries, 1858." This volume of two hundred pages was "Respectfully inscribed to Buckingham Smith, Esq., United States Secretary of Legation at Madrid, To whose efforts in the Discovery and Preservation of the History and Antiquities of the Spanish Dominion in America, a grateful acknowledgement is due from American scholars."

This edition becoming exhausted, after the Civil War, apropos of the three hundredth anniversary of the founding of St. Augustine, a new chapter (XIX) was added, "St. Augustine in its Old Age, 1565-1868," and the volume was re-issued in 1868, under the title, "The Spaniards in Florida, comprising the notable settlement of the Huguenots in 1564, and the History and Antiquities of St. Augustine." The new volume was published in Jacksonville by Columbus Drew, and the author was further described on the title-page as Honorary Member of the New York Historical Society and Lecturer on American History in The University of the South. This institution had just opened that year, in 1868.

This was followed in 1871 by the more ambitious "History of Florida, From its Discovery by Ponce De Leon, in 1512, to the close of the Florida War in 1842 [the time of the author's arrival in the Territory]. Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott and Co., and Jacksonville, Columbus Drew." A third edition of the "History and Antiquities of St. Augustine" was published by Horace Drew, Jacksonville, in 1881. Always interested in *THE SEWANEE REVIEW* Major Fairbanks contributed to the number for November, 1895, a paper, apropos of John Fiske's "Discovery of America," on "Americus Vesputius and the naming of America." On the occasion of the four hundredth anniversary of the first discovery of Florida still another work by him was published by H. and W. B. Drew, Jacksonville, in 1898. This was "Florida, Its History and Its Romance. The oldest settlement in the United States, associated with the most romantic events of American History under the Spanish, French, En-

glish, and American flags, 1497—1898.” A third edition brought down to 1903, including an account of the Jacksonville fire, was issued as a special School History for Florida in 1904, when the author was eighty-four years of age. A year later, still indefatigable, he wrote and published his “History of The University of the South.”

When Florida seceded in January 1861, he believed it his duty to throw in his lot with the State and the Confederacy. With his experience and practical sense he served from 1862 to the close of the war in the Commissary Department of the Army of Tennessee, with headquarters chiefly at Atlanta and Macon, ranking as Major—a title, ever afterwards, according to Southern custom given to him even in private life. Acquiescing in defeat, he sought at once in a broad and liberal spirit of reconciliation to obtain the best and to do the best for the rehabilitation and recuperation of the Southern States.

An ardent member of the Episcopal Church, he was continuously a delegate from the Diocese of Florida to the General Convention of the Church from 1853 on—ever since Florida had been organized as a separate diocese in 1851—and it was his pride that he had never once failed in attendance during his long life. The exception—if exception it be—was when, owing to the existence of a state of war, the delegates from Florida met with the representatives from the sister Southern States in a General Council of the Church in the Confederate States. At the Convention meeting in 1904 in Boston he was specially singled out as the oldest representative of that body, in unremitted attendance for over half a century. In the same year he attended a celebration at his *alma mater*, Union College, on the sixty-fifth anniversary of the graduation of his class of '39, naturally the only survivor at that distance of time.

In 1857 on July 4, the national holiday, on Lookout Mountain, the plan of The University of the South had been promulgated and formal organization effected at a notable meeting of representatives of ten Southern States—the conception of what was intended, transcending all State lines, to be the first great inter-State institution for the higher education of the youth of a grand division of our country. Such a plan naturally fired the

feelings of a man with Major Fairbanks' training and instincts, and from that time on it may rightly be said to have become the leading interest and aim of his life to which he devoted unceasing energy. He was appointed at once delegate and trustee from Florida for the proposed institution; and it was a point of honor that he had been present in session at every meeting of its Board for forty-nine years, including the one in 1906, before his death.

He was a staunch believer in the fundamental principles of The University of the South—a federated institution representing the interests of several States and covering a large extent of territory. He shared in the first splendid planning, and endured the fearful blight that came upon these prospects when everything was swept away through the tragedy of war. Together with Charles Todd Quintard, Bishop of Tennessee, he became the chief agency in the revival of its plans and in its noble history from the humblest beginnings in 1868.

Interestingly enough, and representative of the catholic spirit in the University's origin and development and the cosmopolitan character that has always adhered to it, the two men to whom was primarily due the refounding and reorganization and hence the actual existence of the University of the South, were both of Northern birth and education—Quintard from Connecticut, and Fairbanks from New York State. Quintard had settled first in Georgia and then in Tennessee, had been present at the original corner-stone laying in 1860, had gone through the war in the dual capacity of chaplain and surgeon, and in the first Church Convention held after the war was chosen Bishop of Tennessee to succeed Otey who had died in 1863. In 1860 Major Fairbanks had already built a cottage at Sewanee, together with two of the original founders of the University, Bishop, and later General, Leonidas Polk of Louisiana and Bishop Stephen Elliott of Georgia; but all these cottages had been burned by soldiers' raids in 1863.

With all endowment swept away—three millions had been in sight and the first five hundred thousand pledged—and with nothing but bare land, woods and rocks left, and these in danger of loss by reversion unless soon utilized, the great idea of the University still exercised its spell. Shortly after the close of the

war, in September, 1865, when all hearts and minds in the South were anxiously busied with rehabilitation and reconstruction everywhere, Fairbanks, with another Trustee, and Quintard, the Bishop soon to be, met on the train not far from Nashville, going to the Convention that made Quintard a bishop. The project of the University of the South at Sewanee was earnestly discussed, the collapse of old plans and hopes, and the possibility of still cherishing and restoring the ideals of the founders, which alone had not perished. The result was that the very next summer, in 1866, both Fairbanks and Quintard built homes side by side at Sewanee in what was then an actual wilderness. The two modest log houses were literally hewn out of the living forest; and the original of Major Fairbanks' house, made of the native timber sawed at the ends and firmly cemented together, still remains after forty years in sound condition, an interesting portion of the present attractive home. The courageous act of planting these two homes and the particular location of the two houses determined not only the new birth and the realization of the University, but the precise location of the official buildings and all later structures. From 1867 to 1880, during the first years of the laying out of the University domain and the period of its early wooden buildings down to the time of the erection of the first two stone structures, Major Fairbanks was the University Commissioner of Buildings and Land.

Major Fairbanks had been for many years the sole survivor of the original founders of the University before the War. Half the year he would spend in Florida and the other half at his summer home in Sewanee. As late as his eighty-fifth year, when many men would have rested, he completed a "History of The University of the South, From its Founding in 1857 to the year, 1905," the earlier chapters of which he alone could write from personal knowledge, even though he had not the same intimate command over the details of later years. This work was noticed in our pages by Dr. DuBose in the number for October, 1905, under the caption, "The Romance and Genius of a University."

He had been honored in recent years by being made President of the new Florida Historical Society in 1903 and Histori-

ographer of the University of the South in 1905, and just before his death, representing Union College at the seventy-fifth anniversary of the University of Alabama in June, 1906, he was awarded the honorary degree of LL. D. His library on early Florida history and Spanish relations has been willed to the University of the South. He was buried in the cemetery at Sewanee near the grave of his neighbor and co-worker, Bishop Quintard.

Major Fairbanks being thus identified with interests in many states, North and South, it is believed that the tribute paid him by the senior member of the Sewanee faculty before the students of the University of the South may be fittingly published in these pages, as a memorial of a characteristic patriotic and high-minded citizen of our Republic, who served his country modestly, yet conscientiously and devotedly, in State and in Church, in historical interests and in educational endeavor, as seemed always to him best and right. Faithfulness to duty and firmness in principle were strikingly marked traits in an exceptionally long life in which he was associated with many stirring events and many notable men.

THE EDITOR.

In the providence of God a moment has come to us in the history of this University and of this community which we may not let pass without reflection and without, if possible, interpretation and appropriation to ourselves of its lesson. I describe it inadequately when I speak of it as the passing of the last of our founders. I find myself this morning the oldest official in any way associated with this institution. There is not, I believe, a member of our Board of Trustees or our Faculties, or our business management, the origin of whose connection with us I cannot easily remember. I have been made to recognize the propriety of my undertaking to be the interpreter of the occasion that draws all our hearts so close together to-day. On Friday afternoon last there was in this chapel, and in the offices of this University, one to whom I was but as a child, — not so much

in years as in length and depth and devotion of service and of sacrifice for Sewanee.

I was scarcely more than a school-boy when I first heard of the conception of the University of the South. The story of its founding was a part of the romance and poetry of my youth. It was a large part of the conditions, aspirations, and hopes of the time that first drew my heart and thoughts into the ministry. While I was yet only a young dreamer of far-off things, Major Fairbanks in the very flower and prime of his early manhood was one of the very first to lay his hand, and to consecrate his life, to this great enterprise. No one knows how great it was, in the conception and in the intention of those first founders. Major Fairbanks was probably the youngest of them, and he was a layman. But from the beginning it was not only his dream, his deepest interest and concern in life, it was his religion. It was the form which all his public spirit, his service to his country, his time, and his God, took and kept with unrivalled devotion and fidelity to his last breath, within just these few months of the inauguration of our second half century. Like Moses, his eyes were permitted to look from the Pisgah of our present hopes beyond the borders of the promise that awaits us, but his feet shall not enter with ours into the land that lies before. God has prepared for him a better country; he died not having received the promises to which he so looked forward here, but being still convinced of them. Let his faith fall to-day as a mantle upon us, and let it re-enforce and strengthen our faith to wait and at last to inherit.

In consequence of the completeness of his identification with the project of the University, Major Fairbanks became the intimate associate of all the great Bishops and others whose names are bound up with our history. He was never absent from a single meeting; he became guardian and keeper of all the records. He was saturated with all the traditions, all the ideals, all the plans. He came to be the incarnation or embodiment of the original meaning and intent of Sewanee. His last labor of love was to write its history, at the age of over four-score years.

After our great civil war, forty years ago, some of us made it a matter of principle and of loyalty to the lost cause to stand

very close, in life and in death, to the person of our one Confederate President. We felt that whatever more or whatever else might be said of any other, he was the man who incarnated the cause. We had the feeling that if his heart could have been taken out, or could ever be exhumed, there would be found inscribed upon it the Confederacy, for which he lived and suffered, and for which he would have died. That one great expression or embodiment of our common devotion was all we remembered, and our right arm should lose its cunning or ever we forget it. We need not to exhume the faithful heart so late buried from our sight, to know what is written upon it, and while Sewanee remains true to her origin, her traditions, her ideals, her destiny, the longest, the most constant, the most single-minded and pure-hearted expression and embodiment of faithfulness and loyalty to her cause will not be effaced from her memory.

It might seem to some of you a very easy and simple thing to have retained so long and so faithful a devotion to the best interests of Sewanee. Perhaps there are many of us who feel that we ourselves would have done the same. Well, I have seen a little bit myself of what it *was* for a man like Major Fairbanks to keep faith and heart in this University, and to preserve a steady, even, straight way through some of the stages of its history and of his own experiences—and I want to say that I do not believe there are many of us who could have come through as he did, and been to the last the man who knelt with us here last Friday, and passed out of earthly consciousness with mind and heart and hopes and faith so full of all that makes for the peace and good of this institution. We must remember that our plans and our hopes here have undergone death and resurrection, and that these are not words, grammatical vocables, and nothing more. We must remember that our resurrection was not to the fullness and abundance, and to the strength and vitality and hopefulness of the old life to which we had forever died. We must remember, too, that the great ideas and conceptions and plans which had become so large part of Major Fairbanks' very mental, moral, and spiritual constitution, had not only to experience resurrection but to undergo revolution,. The institution that was ready to start before the war was not the institution that started

after the war. To have set out with the largest, completest, most ideal conceptions, and with the possession and expectation of the amplest means for executing and realizing them; and to have to come down to the paltriest beginnings and the total absence of any means at all; to feel the needs, intellectual and spiritual, greater and more pressing than ever, the conceptions truer, the ideals more vital and more matter of life and death with us in our adversity than ever they had seemed in our prosperity; and then year by year to be made to experience only more and more the inadequacy of faith and endurance alone for the achievement of results that of necessity must be more tangible and material, if their ends were ever to be accomplished;—all this may have been very needful discipline for results as yet hidden in the impenetrable future; but they were not easy to endure or to survive at the time. But this was not at all the worst.

In the attempting great things with little or no means, there inevitably comes about this difficulty and evil: in doing the thing we can, we will sometimes not only fall short of but actually contravene, and contradict or seem to contradict, the thing we should—and would if we could. A conflict ensues between the impracticable better and the practicable lesser or worse. The man who has to do the acting is charged with sacrificing the higher ideal to the lower expedient. The man who does the criticising or leads the opposition is charged with being a traditionalist, or reactionist or obstructionist, or with being visionary and unpractical. There is more or less of truth and justice in both charges, and exaggeration and excess on both sides. The representative of the possible, and the expedient, and the “best that can be done” will come not unnaturally to weaken in his sense and appreciation of the high claims of the other side, the ideal and impracticable. And the latter will underrate the necessities of action, and the reasons for the merely possible best, or best possible. Poverty and weakness in the days that are past have rendered us liable to such troubles. There have been questions of principle and questions of policy, and all sorts of questions, upon which there have been differences. Major Fairbanks was never outside of any question that involved the interests or the character or the meaning and purposes of this

University. He was not always agreed with or listened to; he was not always understood or appreciated; it goes without saying that he was not always right in his opinions or positions; this University has worn out and killed many a good man in the making of it — but through it all Major Fairbanks lived out his life in and for it, and died at last still fully alive and wide awake in its service. More and more his silent endurance and survival of all the trials that beset himself or assailed his trust; his consistency, his integrity, his fidelity, won him the assured place which he has honorably occupied for years past — the patriarch of Sewanee, the conservator of its traditions, the exemplar of its undying faith.

I have spoken of Major Fairbanks wholly in his relation with the University, and the University in connection with him. It is due to some of us to say something of him in his relation with this community, the old permanent community of Sewanee. He was the first of us here, living or dead. He established, I believe, the first *home* on this domain — the first before the war, and when that was destroyed, then the first again after the war. This may not be literally true, only in case he was not before, but only side by side with, Bishop Quintard in this matter. It was his peculiar distinction that he was always side by side, and up with, the second Founder of Sewanee, as he had been with the first. But he was the builder of the first home now standing in our midst, and what ought the logs of that old home to mean and be to us! Has there been another built since that — that through all these trying and faithful years could better stand with us for all the best our old home life ever was, for all we should pray and hope our home life may ever continue to be!

Friday evening before the last, as I said, Major Fairbanks knelt with us for the last time in this chapel. He was the builder of it and the author of every change it has undergone in its eventful history. On his way home he met the Vice-Chancellor and by his request went into his office to act for the last time in his time-honored capacity of counsellor and adviser. His head was upon the maps of the University, its business in his hand, its interests upon his heart, when the change came which forever

closed his consciousness to terrestrial affairs. In the old home — the first Sewanee home — he lay for several days, only just aware of the love that enveloped him by day and night, and of the sacred offices that ministered to him for the last time here the bread of life and commended his soul to God who gave it. On Friday evening he was borne into this chapel once again for his last office in it. Well might it, and most appropriately, utter along with him its *Nunc Dimittis*. Like him it has performed its part — and what a part! What is there of it that he did not put here? When was he ever voluntarily absent from one single service in it? His remains were borne by reverent and loving hands into that cemetery that yearly grows more sacred to us. What is there *there* that does not speak to us of him? As of everything else that meets our eyes on this mountain, he was, more than all the rest of us put together, the layer out and maker and keeper of it. There is nothing here that did not know and own him in it. There is nothing here that does not and will not feel and mourn his loss.

WILLIAM PORCHER DUBOSE.

The University of the South.